

PM SHOWERS/STORMS
High: 78
Low: 62
60% chance of rain



Sat.: Partly cloudy, 72/59
Sun.: Scattered rain, 65/55
Mon.: Scattered rain, 68/52

Complete weather: B10

The Atlanta Journal-Constitution

Credible. Compelling. Complete.

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DO GUIDE

YOUR GUIDE TO MAKING THE MOST OF YOUR TIME AT HOME



IN METRO, B1

JOBLESS CLAIMS SOAR

REQUESTS FOR BENEFITS OVERLOAD STATE COMPUTER SYSTEMS

AJC TOP STORY: CORONAVIRUS OUTBREAK

Lawmaker's diagnosis shakes up Legislature

More than 250 urged to self-isolate for 2 weeks.

By Greg Bluestein
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Georgia's entire legislative branch was urged to self-isolate

after a state senator revealed he tested positive for coronavirus, two days after he showed up for a special session vote with symptoms of the disease while he was waiting for the results.

The development sparked outrage from some of his colleagues, a reprimand from Gov. Brian Kemp and new scrutiny over recent decisions by legislative leaders that

could have prolonged the exposure to hundreds of people at the Capitol.

All 236 Georgia lawmakers and dozens of the Legislature's staffers, along with teenage pages, received memos late Wednesday urging them to isolate themselves for two weeks after the state senator, Brandon Beach, disclosed his positive test for COVID-19.

What infuriated many was his admission that he still attended votes over the past week as he suffered from a mild fever and a cough – two of the most frequent symptoms of the virus. On Monday, Beach told bystanders he wasn't feeling well and was visibly fighting a cold.

Sen. Brandon Beach attended votes while feeling sick.

Lawmaker continued on A6

RESEARCH

CHASING A SOLUTION

Ga. companies join race to develop treatments, vaccines.

By Nedra Rhone
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Seven years ago, researchers at Drug Innovation Ventures at Emory set out to develop antiviral medications that could battle a broad spectrum of viruses. Their main target at the time was Venezuelan equine encephalitis, a mosquito-borne illness with a high mortality rate that had been weaponized during the Cold War.

But over the years, the drug they developed to combat that disease, EIDD-2801, also showed strong results in animal testing against influenza and coronaviruses.

Now researchers are working around the clock to prepare the drug as a treatment for the novel coronavirus. They hope to begin testing in April.

"We had all of that information and background data and government funding to go into human testing for influenza and bam, coronavirus emerges out of Wuhan," said David Perryman, COO of DRIVE.

Currently, there are no approved medications to treat or vaccines to prevent the novel coronavirus, which causes the disease COVID-19. As the virus has spread worldwide, infecting more than 212,000 people and killing more than 8,700, researchers



Farshad Guirakhoo, chief scientific officer at Smyrna-based GeoVax, checks on one of the vaccine candidates for COVID-19 his lab is working on.

At least a half-dozen efforts are underway in Georgia to research and develop treatments and vaccines for the new coronavirus.

The view through a microscope of one of the GeoVax vaccine candidates for COVID-19 the lab is working on. PHOTOS BY BOB ANDRES / ROBERT.ANDRES@AJC.COM

ACROSS THE STATE

Critical period underway for state

Cases spread across range of ages; most are in metro Atlanta.

By Alan Judd
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A sharp escalation in coronavirus deaths and illnesses signals that Georgia is entering a dangerous new phase of the outbreak.

State officials said Thursday that 10 Georgians have died from COVID-19, the disease caused by the new coronavirus – an increase of six since the previous day. In addition, the state medical examiner's office said it is investigating five other deaths that may be linked to the pandemic.

Meanwhile, the number of COVID-19 cases in Georgia confirmed by laboratory tests increased to 297, nearly 50% more than Wednesday's total.

More worrisome, however, is the death rate in Georgia among those with confirmed cases: nearly 3.5%.

By comparison, in Wuhan, China, where the virus originated, 1.4% of cases were fatal, according to a study published Thursday in the scientific journal Nature Medicine.

In remarks streamed online from the state Capitol, Gov. Brian Kemp and Dr. Kathleen Toomey, Georgia's public health commissioner, predicted a continuing surge in cases.

"The more we test, the more we will find," Kemp said. "We saw that today, and I think it will continue."

Most confirmed cases are in metro Atlanta, particularly in Fulton and Cobb counties. But

Critical continued on A6

BUSINESSES

Restaurant closings affect thousands of workers

Pivot to delivery leaves most in survival mode, with few employees at best.

By Stephen Deere
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Atlanta Mayor Keisha Lance Bottoms' decision Thursday to close in-person restaurant dining in the city will impact roughly 3,000 establishments and the livelihoods of about 100,000 industry employees.

Bottoms' executive order also shut-

tered bars, nightclubs, private social clubs, fitness centers, gyms, movie theaters, bowling alleys and arcades – but left restaurants with the ability to continue offering takeout and delivery, a model that many were already moving toward as patrons stayed home during the coronavirus pandemic.

Roughly 70 to 80% of restaurants have already closed, said Karen Bremer, chief executive of the Georgia Restaurant Association.

At least 32 states have banned in-person dining as of Thursday, accord-

Restaurants continued on A6

INSIDE



ALYSSA POINTER / ALYSSA.POINTER@AJC.COM

Waffle House chairman criticizes limits on business

Waffle House Chairman Joe Rogers Jr. says banning in-restaurant dining and closing some businesses are "totally out of proportion." A3



THE LATEST DEVELOPMENTS

FINANCIAL RELIEF

Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell is proposing direct payments of \$1,200 per person and \$2,400 for couples to help cushion the financial impact of the outbreak.

TRAVEL WARNING

The State Department recommended that U.S. citizens abroad either return home or stay in place. The global travel advisory now is level four, usually reserved for war zones or areas beset by serious disruptions.

RIISING TOLL IN ITALY

Italy, one of the hardest-hit countries in the world since the virus began to spread, passed a grim milestone: deaths from the virus had soared to 3,405, outstripping the toll in China, where the virus first hit. Details, A2

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